



The Philosophers' Club: College students and alternative high school students engaged in mutual transformation through philosophy discussion

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Summary

In response to rising trends in juvenile incarceration, university faculty and students have created cooperative partnerships between middle and high schools, and higher education institutions to replenish academic skill deficits and reconnect youth with school and the community. The Carroll-Cleveland Philosophers' Program (CCPP) model, founded at John Carroll University in 2000 and adapted at the University of Virginia (UVa) Women's Center in 2009, uses philosophical discussion, gifted education strategies, art, and service learning to help alternative 7th through 10th grade students "create their own life's meaning."

CCPP was evaluated to determine what students learned and how the program affected attitudes toward school and altruism. The results over 3 years suggested:

- Students showed statistically significant gains across achievement domains, but not in attitudes toward school or altruism;
- Enrichment activities and discussions were engaging for students;
- Relationships with their community and with the teaching assistants became more important to participants.

After the initial CCPP evaluation, several changes were made to the program and philosophy was used

more as a method for involving students in authentic discussions about the world. The second evaluation suggested:

- Student writing significantly improved in areas reflecting critical thinking, written expression, and total writing, but not in mechanics.
- Teacher perceptions of oral/written participation also indicated student growth.
- Students showed growth on one of the altruism measures, suggesting they were more willing to participate in service learning.
- Students believed that the philosophy curriculum better enabled them to communicate their thoughts (verbal/written), skills they felt would help them reach future goals.

These results suggest that the CCPP model may significantly impact students' educational experiences and increase students' confidence and ability to write and speak about topics that they find important.

Qualitative evaluations of the UVa modality suggest that college students were positively impacted by their interactions with alternative high school students.

References

There were no references provided with this proposal.